

# We Are Many Youth, But With One Struggle!

International Student Movement

A worldwide economic crisis exploded in 2008 that has been deeply consequential. This crisis can be only compared to the 1929 crisis. Powerfully striking at the core of the system, first it shook the United States and now it is developing more intensely in Europe. However, the effects of the crisis can be seen all over the world.

Governments have reacted the same way to the threat the crisis presents for their countries: make the youth and the workers pay for the crisis. They have allied with big business and banks that do not want decreased profits. Together, they elaborate plans of austerity that take away historical rights of the working class, result in layoffs, imposing work speed-ups and leave the youth without any possibility of a future.

The young of today, who are living the beginnings of this deep crisis, will experience as their reality living conditions even more difficult than those of previous generations. In the Arab world and in Europe, the rates of unemployment paint a terrifying picture, like in Spain where unemployment rates have surpassed 50%.

Among these, immigrants, women, and the black and LGBT community suffer even more, facing prejudice as a daily reality, the most precarious jobs and the lowest wages. This could be seen in 2010, with the revolt of black youth from the ghettos of London. They were treated by the international media and the government as marginals.

The economic crisis also has strong impact on education. Regardless of the disparity within each country, imperialism has launched an offensive on its quality and affordability at all levels of public education. Year after year governments cut education budgets, making it clear that for them education is not a priority. The consequences are precarious infrastructure and buildings, lack of teachers and professors, unqualified education workers, lack of student financial aid, etc. What has made the situation worse is the project for the universities that is being implemented today. It is one that transforms graduation courses into technological ones, destroying the basic mandate of teaching-research-extension, and all this while promoting an expansion of enrollment without any increase in funding. One consequence of this project is privatization, be it through direct collection of fees, be it by opening the universities to direct business control of laboratories and research.

It is imperative to defend high quality, public, free education as a right of every single person. We demand more funding for education, because this is the only way to make the democratization of access to education possible and to guarantee student financial aid, university dining halls, housing for students, child care centers, in addition to struggling for democratization of the internal decision-making processes. We must guarantee respect for university autonomy, that the decisions be taken by the entire academic community. With each confrontation with dictatorships and austerity plans,

the defense of public, high quality education is an essential demand of the youth ñ for an education that meets the needs and interests of the working class.

As we saw written on the signs in the Plaza del Sol, in Spain: if today our generation lacks education, jobs, housing, health security, our generation is one that also lacks fear. And we have demonstrated this fact in many heroic struggles across the globe. In the Middle East and North Africa, the youth has led a real revolution, overthrowing 30 year dictatorships that ruled through brutality and oppression and emerging as an example for the world. It has overthrown dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and is now facing a civil war in Syria. The occupation of Tahir Square for 18 days was a symbol for the new wave of struggle that has spread throughout the world. The method of occupying the squares has become a symbol of the new mobilizations.

Youth has also demonstrated its will and strength to fight and resist in Greece, Spain, England, Portugal, Italy, France. As the economic crisis is putting in jeopardy the future of the youth, we have taken to the streets, occupied plazas and universities, and faced down the repression and the governments. In the U.S., the Occupy Movement brought onto the scene major demonstrations in the center of the world, demonstrations not seen in decades. In Latin America, Chilean students pushed forward tremendous mobilizations, using a great deal of creativity and bravery, against the privatization of public education.

All these struggles faced much repression. Governments make an effort to silence by force the indignant shouts of youth, using any means necessary to do so. We've seen hundreds of killed and thousands of political prisoners, lots of bombs, tear gas, rubber bullets, lethal weapons. Despite this, the resistance grows.

We should learn from this moment of great clashes. First of all, the youth must have the organized working class as its strategic ally in struggle. We must raise up high the flag of worker-student unity, reviving the May '68 tradition and so many other moments in history. This creates the key combination of the youth's explosive energy and the experience and power of those who produce the wealth in our society. It was only through the forging of this alliance that was possible to overthrow dictatorships in the Arab world. It is not by chance that on the eve of the fall of Mubarak in Egypt there was a three day strike of workers at the Suez Canal. Only through this alliance will it be possible to defeat the plans of austerity and ensure that the workers and youth do not pay the price for the crisis.

Another lesson we must learn is that each struggle of students and the youth as a whole should serve the purpose of strengthening its organizations, in a democratic, independent way, united with the workers. And those organizations should have as one of their priorities creating international connections. Regardless of the uneven development in each country, of cultural differences, of the rhythm and expressions that the economic crisis will have, there is one thing we are sure of: there is a common reality our generation is facing. If

we are attacked as a whole, we must answer as a whole as well. We must establish strong bonds among youth organizations so we are in a better position to struggle and dream of a better future. With the combative spirit, will to fight and fearlessness, we invite all the organizations of students and the youth to take up this struggle.

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